

VZCZCXRO9809  
OO RUEHDBU  
DE RUEHBUL #3123/01 1931301  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 121301Z JUL 06  
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1321  
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE  
RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASH DC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J5/UNMA//  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC//J3//  
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHINGTON DC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 6143  
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL  
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUMICEA/JICCENT MACDILL AFB FL  
RHMFISS/COMSOCCENT MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KABUL 003123

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SA/FO DAS GASTRIGHT, SA/CT AND SA/A  
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN,  
CENTCOM FOR POLAD, CG CFA-A, CG CJTF-76  
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG  
OSD FOR BREZINSKI  
RELEASABLE ISAF

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/10/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: PRT/KHOWST - TAKING THE ERRATIC POLITICAL PULSE OF  
KHOWST PROVINCE

REF: KABUL 3001

KABUL 00003123 001.4 OF 003

Classified By: ACTING DCM ANGUS SIMMONS FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Khowst's July 2, IRI-sponsored town hall meeting for GOA officials to discuss security, corruption, and reconstruction issues devolved into a heated series of speeches denouncing and defending the GOA, local officials, and the international community. Two MPs made negative remarks about CF to start the event, one of whom later tried to explain his remarks to PRT. Speeches from elders emphasized unity, support for the GOA, and reconciliation. The well-organized event attracted 700 Khowst citizens to an open and frank exchange of views, which on balance reflected majority support for the GOA. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) PRTOff, USAID Rep, and PRT Afghan Cultural Specialist (ACS) attended a government town hall meeting July 2 sponsored by the International Republican Institute (IRI), funded by USAID, and executed by IRI's local subcontractor, Welfare Association for the Development of Afghanistan (WADAN). The meetings were designed to facilitate communication between government officials and constituents. (Note: IRI and WADAN have scheduled the meetings for all 34 provinces during the June/July parliamentary recess. End Note) The Khowst event attracted about 700 people, including three members of the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House), one member of the Meshrano Jirga (Upper House), and District Commissioners, all Provincial Council members, members of the mullah, mujahedin, tribal unity, and women's shuras, and many influential elders and mullahs.

Off-script MPs: Blame the Outsiders and Ex-Communists  
-----

13. (SBU) A long speech by Deputy Governor Ajab Khan Sangeen detailing the progress of the government and unique challenges Khowst faces as a border province should have set the stage for a discussion on the scheduled topics: security, corruption, and reconstruction. The two firebrand Parliamentarians that followed, however, concentrated on anti-provincial government and, at times, anti-Coalition Forces (CF) rhetoric. Meer Bath Khan Mangal (Meshrano Jirga) said if the CF broke international laws or otherwise unjustly harassed Afghans, the Afghan people would stand against them in jihad (Note: While incendiary, this is not the same as advocating the Afghans should be in jihad against the CF, as some CF in the audience misinterpreted. End Note.)

14. (SBU) Hanif Shah (Wolesi Jirga) began by saying he didn't want to complain about anyone, but proceeded to do just that. Shah lamented a perceived over-representation of ex-communist government officials, and accused NDS (National Directorate of Security) officials of fingering innocent ex-mujahedin to the CF, motivated by communist-era vendettas. (He said much the same to A/DCM June 12 - see reftel.) In his surprisingly schizophrenic conclusion, Shah told Afghans not to oppose the GOA because "anyone can peacefully advance their complaints in this government. There is no need for more fighting." Both men contended the GOA was ignoring Khowst, however, and urged audience members to bring their concerns to them.

15. (SBU) MP Sahira Sharif focused her criticism on inept NGOs and their local employees and contractors who are dividing reconstruction funds among themselves in multiple layers of sub-contracting. She also scolded the Afghan media for underreporting NGO and GOA corruption; the international community for rejecting a parliamentary initiative to

KABUL 00003123 002.4 OF 003

increase teachers' pay; and all institutions for ignoring the promotion of women's rights. "These are your sisters, daughters, and mothers. Give them rights," she pleaded. She urged Afghans to forget old jihads and focus instead on a jihad to re-build the country.

PC Members Exert Their Presence

16. (SBU) Provincial Council Chairman Doud Khan Shahid Zoi Zadran was the only GOA official to mention President Karzai's agreement in principle to upgrade Khowst's security ranking from level 3 to level 1. Zoi explained that a Khowst delegation had met with Karzai the last week of June and held him to an earlier promise to upgrade Khowst's status. He asserted the change would triple security manpower and resources for Khowst. Although the change was public knowledge, it had not been officially announced and still must be formally signed off by the President and Parliament, according to Governor Pathan. Pathan told PRTOff July 5 that Zoi was out of line for announcing an initiative he was secondary player on and that "he doesn't even understand." Pathan formally announced the change July 5. Following a common pattern by speakers, Zoi spoke contradictorily about supporting the GOA and criticizing it for making promises, but not delivering.

Elders Air Grievances and Urge Unity

17. (SBU) Nasrullah Qasimy, head of the mullah shura, viciously attacked the "corrupt, incompetent" provincial government. He claimed that Governor Pathan and other officials were granting permits for refugee camp plots to the highest bidder, regardless of their refugee status. He also urged local contractors to do "honest work", like foreign contractors, and admonished judges for taking bribes. Qasimy complained the GOA was ignoring mullahs and unfairly associating madrassa students with Anti-Coalition Militias

(ACM).

¶8. (SBU) Gahzi Nawaz Tani, head of the tribal unity shura, presented a scathing reality check, challenging the audience to stop blaming others for corruption and recognize that "this is about us." He said that, although he understand the challenges of poor pay and governing a border province, there was no excuse for corruption. He asserted God was punishing Khowst for its corruption with a series of droughts and earthquakes. Other elders agreed that corruption was rampant and the public was on the verge of open revolt on this issue.

¶9. (SBU) Elder speakers were more optimistic and focused on national unity and reconciliation. Tani Elder Haji Rassoul Muhammad bluntly refuted the notion that Khowst was dominated by former communist-era officials. "Who are these communists? Is Karzai a communist?. Is the Governor a communist?. Are the District Commissioners communists? You are the leadership, are you communists?" He urged people to let go of old prejudices and suspicions, hold individuals accountable instead of blaming groups, and go about rebuilding Afghanistan.

#### Khan Mangal's Quasi-Apology and Tap Dance

-----

¶10. (C) On July 7, the Governor brought Meer Bath Khan Mangal with him to the PRT. The Governor explained Khan's July 2 comments were not meant to insult the CF, but rather to warn them not to make the same mistakes as the Soviets.

KABUL 00003123 003.4 OF 003

The Governor explained that Khan was deceived by a letter-writing campaign organized by some disgruntled ex-mujahedin, perhaps with ISI backing, to create the perception that unjust and culturally insensitive CF searches of homes were prevalent in Khowst. He said many letters were written by fictitious authors describing events that had not taken place.

¶11. (C) When PRTOff talked directly to Khan, however, he explained he had received 21 letters in the last four or five months, most of which he believed to be from actual people describing real events. Khan described the situation of Tere Zayi resident Kerin Shah as typical. Shah alleged his home was searched by CF based on faulty intelligence, his door destroyed, and women in the home treated disrespectfully. He said most of the incidents took place between four and 12 months ago. Khan meekly asserted the statements were not meant to be as anti-CF as some CF had interpreted them. He further explained his comments would help both the CF and GOA by placating the populace's desire for retribution with assurances that their concerns are being addressed by the GOA, eliminating the need to resort to violent opposition. "This will calm them down." He also hoped his words would create greater CF awareness of the sensitivity of searches.

¶12. (C) Khan said he had not shared the letters with other members of the Meshrano Jirga's Human Rights Committee because he feared it would hurt the CF reputation. Khan preferred first to work with the CF to improve search methods and clear up misunderstandings. The PRTOff explained he appreciated efforts to support CF, but that if searches were improperly conducted, the USG wanted to know. PRTOff also said maintaining professional and respectful searches was a high priority for the maneuver force commander. (Note: The standard policy for the maneuver force is not/not to enter compounds and search homes, but rather to work with Afghan security forces and let them take the lead. End Note.) At PRTOff's request, Khan promised to provide a list of the complaints through local representatives of the National Democratic Institute, an NGO.

¶13. (C) Comment: Kudos to IRI for the best-organized and executed event PRTOff has seen in Khowst. It was discouraging to hear Khowst politicians blast the CF, NGOs,

and the GOA while minimizing their own responsibilities. Khan Mangal's assertion that the negative messages were more show than substance was not particularly reassuring. Still, we consider the event a success. Even the most negative speakers made positive remarks about national unity and moving the country forward. Pessimistic and ignorant messages were exposed to the light of day and openly refuted, rather than allowed to fester privately. Although early expressions of anti-CF sentiments garnered some scattered applause, positive comments about reconciliation and support for the GOA received more applause. According to Governor Pathan, the anti-CF rhetoric was staged by Hanif Shah supporters in an attempt to hijack the event for his political advantage. If true, our impression is the hijacking failed. End Comment.

NORLAND